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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001167

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM MZ
SUBJECT: RULING FRELIMO PARTY CRUSHES OPPOSITION IN
ELECTIONS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Todd Chapman, reasons 1.4(b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The ruling FRELIMO party appears to have overwhelmed the opposition in general elections held on October 28. Current president and FRELIMO candidate Armando Guebuza could get above 75pct of the presidential vote, and FRELIMO should walk away with a super-majority (more than two-thirds) in the National Assembly. Election day was generally calm and polling station logistics and processes worked smoothly. Estimates of abstention rates vary significantly. There was an unusually coincidental blackout of two independent TV stations during the election day, suggestions of intimidation and ballot-stuffing, and arbitrary changes in polling station locations. The electoral process is ongoing, and further ballot counts could add percentages that would bolster FRELIMO's margins, highlighting the need for continued vigilance by election observer missions. The disqualification of new opposition party MDM from many legislative races prior to election appears to have halted its momentum--though its showing suggests that it might still have a future--and FRELIMO efforts to ensure an outcome in its favor were exceptionally effective. END SUMMARY.

Raw Numbers) FRELIMO Overwhelms

¶2. (SBU) A parallel vote tabulation carried out late on October 28 by the Elections Institute of Southern Africa based on initial balloting indicates that nationwide, current president and FRELIMO candidate Armando Guebuza could win over 75pct of presidential votes (13pct higher than his showing in 2004), with traditional opposition RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama 15pct and new Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) candidate Daviz Simango getting 10pct. Limited initial sampling suggests that Guebuza will gain nearly 85pct of valid presidential election votes in southern areas of the country, and above 60pct in areas that have previously been opposition strongholds in the central and northern regions. If this holds, FRELIMO will easily surpass the 167 of 250 seats needed for a two-thirds supermajority in the national legislative assembly and will control all ten provincial legislatures.

Positives: Calm and Efficiency Prevail

¶3. (SBU) In general, the elections day climate was calm--there were only a few reports of localized violence. Estimates of the abstention rate varied significantly; some observer groups suggested a high turnout rate, while others indicated that as many as two-thirds of voters stayed home. Turnout in southern cities was well over 50pct, but it appears that rural areas were well below this number, thus

bringing down the overall averages. Observation groups reported that polling station logistics generally functioned smoothly, and raising the number of polling station workers from five to seven helped speed up processes-these national elections were held in just one day for the first time.

A Highly Unusual Communications Blackout

14. (SBU) Independent TV stations STV and TIM both suffered extended blackouts for most of elections day. TIM's director general indicated that the cut to his station was because the government-owned telecommunications company TDM arbitrarily decided to cut the signal. STV Chairman Daniel David said that there was an unexplained equipment breakdown, and that he was still awaiting a final report. There also appeared to be some problems with mobile telephone networks.

Intimidation, Claims of Ballot Stuffing

15. (SBU) There are early indications of ballot box stuffing, as there was over 100pct turnout at some remote polling stations in Gaza and Tete provinces, with Guebuza winning 99.99pct of the vote in these areas, and other instances of unusually large numbers of ballots marked in the exact same manner. Similar accusations have been lodged about activity at polling stations outside Mozambique, where expatriate Mozambicans are permitted to vote. U.S. observers also noted Frelimo party 'supervisors' prominently seated in open areas

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near some polling places. These individuals, usually young men with an intimidating physical presence, appeared to have no function related to the election. In a few instances, international observers were denied access to some polling stations.

Polling Stations Arbitrarily Moved

16. (C) Civil society observers told poloff on October 28 that 400 polling stations were arbitrarily moved at the last moment and without any announcement from their legally designated locations to alternate spots. U.S. observers noted the results of this action at some locations with multiple polling stations*some stations had lines of several hundred people long, while others were completely empty. U.S. observers also recorded instances of individuals who were not elections authorities directing voters away from locations to other stations that were distant. (Note: While these individuals may have been operating in good faith and were just being helpful, this has also been noted as a common tactic to keep opposition voters from making it to their assigned voting booth before closing time in previous elections. End note.)

Comment: A Highly Organized, Pre-Planned Outcome

17. (C) The electoral process is ongoing and must proceed through several more vote-counting steps at the district, provincial, and national level. In previous elections, each of these steps has added a small percentage of votes in favor of FRELIMO, that when taken as a package could add five percent to the presidential election and swing several legislative races. In other words, there is still opportunity aplenty to play with numbers to ensure appropriate outcomes for FRELIMO as necessary (although the victory appears so complete that additional manipulation would seem extravagant), and elections observers must maintain vigilance throughout the ensuing days and weeks.

¶8. (C) The CNE decision in September to disqualify MDM from many legislative races appears to have halted the party's momentum dead in its tracks, especially if abstention rates ultimately trend towards the higher estimates. In any case, after this elections cycle and municipal elections last year, FRELIMO will control all organs of government at all levels more completely than at any time since the Peace Accords of 1992. The FRELIMO machinery, well-financed by party businesses and state-owned entities, did its job impressively well. Observer groups are likely to give relatively favorable reviews of the process on elections day itself, but ultimately this election was decided before it ever started, and now with a super majority in the national assembly, FRELIMO can change the constitution at will. Still, Simango's showing suggests that his MDM party is here to stay and could be capable of overtaking RENAMO as an active opposition, should FRELIMO allow that to happen.

CHAPMAN